

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIM

1. (Previously presented) A procurement system for purchasing a special item between a buyer of the special item and at least one supplier capable of supplying the special item, said system comprising:

a fulfillment system for communicating between said buyer and said supplier;

an electronic database associated with said fulfillment system, said special item not being located within said database;

an electronic knowledge base including a plurality of predetermined relationships and a plurality of predetermined rules;

a special requisition for containing a description of said special item;

a common language generator for normalizing said database with respect to said predetermined relationships in accordance with said predetermined rules of said knowledge base; and

said common language generator normalizing information obtained in part from said special requisition by using said knowledge base and adding the information to said database for future reference.

2. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 1, wherein said electronic database of said fulfillment system comprises an electronic catalog database, said catalog database comprising catalog item information normalized with respect to said predetermined relationships in accordance with said predetermined rules of said knowledge base.

3. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said special requisition is partially normalized by said common language generator according to said predetermined rules, with said buyer suggesting enhancements to said predetermined relationships for creating a potential unique description of the special item.

4. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 3, wherein said

special requisition is reviewed by said at least one supplier and includes a proposed modification to at least one of said predetermined relationships.

5. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 4, further comprising a new predetermined rule to uniquely identify the special item, said new predetermined rule based at least in part on said updated information contained within said special requisition.

6. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited by claim 4, wherein said predetermined relationships comprise class and attribute characteristics and said at least one supplier is a plurality of suppliers, said suppliers reviewing said special requisition and said fulfillment system normalizing said updated data received from each of said suppliers for comparison by said buyer, said buyer comparing said updated information based on identical class and attribute characteristics so as to provide a consistent basis for comparison between each special item available for purchase.

7. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said at least one supplier is identified with specific predetermined relationships, said fulfillment system comparing said special requisition prepared in accordance with said predetermined rules to select said at least one supplier to receive and review said special requisition.

8. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said update information related to the special item is normalized according to said predetermined rules and stored within said catalog database to uniquely identify the special item.

9. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 2, wherein said predetermined relationships include class, attribute and value characteristics.

10. (Previously presented) A procurement system for purchasing a desired item, comprising:

a normalized electronic catalog database comprising at least one unique catalog item, wherein each unique catalog item stored within said electronic catalog database is identified with respect to class, attribute, and value relationships;

a common language generator having a knowledge base, said knowledge base comprising a set of predetermined rules used to convert free form catalog item information into said normalized electronic catalog database in accordance with said relationships;

an item selection procedure, said procedure relying on said relationships to locate the desired item within said electronic catalog database; and

an item specifying procedure, said procedure being invoked when the desired item cannot be located by said item selection procedure within said electronic catalog database;

a structured requisition subsystem for creating a structured requisition to uniquely identify the desired item that cannot be located within said catalog database using said relationships and at least one new class, attribute or value added to said relationships;

said common language generator normalizing information obtained in part from said structured requisition by using said knowledge base and adding the information to said database for future reference.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 10, wherein said relationships used to create said structured requisition further comprise identification of at least one supplier, said structured requisition being automatically sent to said identified at least one supplier by said system.

13. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited by claim 10, wherein said structured requisition is used to develop at least one new predetermined rule for uniquely identifying the desired item that cannot be located within said catalog database.

14. (Previously presented) A procurement system as recited in claim 13, wherein said at least one new predetermined rule is added to said knowledge base to provide an update to said relationships.

15. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 14, wherein identifying information concerning the desired item is stored in said database in accordance with said relationships.

16. (Original) A procurement system as recited in claim 15, wherein the desired item becomes a catalog item available through said selection procedure after undergoing said specifying procedure.

17. (Previously presented) A method for continuously updating a procurement system comprising the steps of:

predetermining a set of rules to convert free form information associated with a catalog item into a normalized catalog item;

providing a common language generator having an electronic knowledge base comprising said predetermined set of rules and predetermined relationships;

establishing, by said common language generator using said knowledge base, a normalized electronic catalog database of normalized catalog items based on predetermined rules and relationships;

processing a request for a special item not located within said catalog database using said predetermined relationships;

specifying an additional relationship in a structured requisition to uniquely identify the special item;

normalizing information obtained from said structured requisition by said common language generator using said knowledge base; and

adding the information to said catalog database for future reference.

18. (Original) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein said predetermined relationships include class, attribute and value characteristics and said additional relationship is at least one of class, attribute, or value.

19. (Currently amended) A method as recited in claim 18, further comprising the steps of[[:]] updating said rules to incorporate said new class, attribute or value from said specifying.

20. (Currently amended) A procurement method for ordering a special item comprising the steps of:

providing a common language generator;

providing an electronic common language generator knowledge base comprising predetermined rules and predetermined relationships[[:]];

searching for an item within an electronic database;

determining that said item is not within said electronic database;

after it is determined that said item is not within said electronic database performing the steps of:

(a) creating a structured requisition for uniquely describing said item,

(b) transmitting said structured requisition to at least one potential supplier,

(c) locating a desired supplier for said item, and

(d) adding information about said item from said structured requisition to said electronic database normalized by said common language generator according to said predetermined rules and relationships of said common language generator knowledge base.

21. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 20, further comprising the step of normalizing said database by said common language generator using said knowledge base such that information from said requisition is categorized in accordance with class, attribute and value relationships.

22. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 20, wherein said creating step includes a step of identifying normalized relationships for said item.

23. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said transmitting step includes the step of automatically identifying said potential supplier using said normalized relationships.

24. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said locating step includes the step of updating said normalized relationships to create a new relationship that uniquely identifies said item.

25. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 22, wherein said adding step comprises using said new relationship.

26. (Previously presented) A procurement method as recited in claim 24, further comprising the steps of:

providing free form item data;

adding a new relationship to said knowledge base;

processing, by said common language generator, said free form item data through said knowledge base; and

updating said database with said processed free form item data.